

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,
Please require all stations to increase coverage of policy and political information stories and increase their foreign affairs news programming. It is also vital that they cover campaigns during this election cycle meticulously, rather than filling their news and public affairs programming with stories that may be mildly interesting, but have no real value toward building civic engagement and knowledge. Reinstate the fairness doctrine and monitor all broadcasters to insure more programming in the public interest. Please find new ways to stop the tendency toward the dumbing down of America and the commodification of the public. We must find new ways to engage people in democracy if this country is to prosper. Limit consolidation and ask for and fund research from Uniiversity professors and graduate students who understand the real problems facing a mediated cultural environment. I belive that the Telecommunications act of 1996 further destroyed diversity in the media and ensured oligarchical trends industry-wide. Profit margins average 30% annually in the braodcast industry, yet giving back to the community and focusing on public interest issues appears to be beyond their voluntary capabilities. Please do the work that Amercan's expect of the FCC by addressing these problems in effective ways.

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us.

Sincerely,

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